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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABIDJAN 000475

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KINSHASA PASS TO BRAZZAVILLE

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TAGS: PREL PGOV ASEC IV
SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: SIXTH MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP

Classified By: POL/ECON Jim Wojtasiewicz, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

CORRECTED COPY - Previous cable Abidjan 414 was garbled.

¶1. (C) At the sixth meeting of the International Working Group (IWG), the group was alarmed to hear from a series of senior Ivoirian officials in charge of various aspects of the peace process that the political process is once again at an impasse and that hardly any progress has been made toward elections, halfway through the year the Security Council gave the Ivoirians to prepare for them. This provoked a communique considerably more direct and emphatic than those of previous meetings, in effect demanding immediate action on simultaneous identification and disarmament, threatening sanctions against those who obstruct the electoral process and/or the work of the IWG, and warning that the international community might well not extend President Gbagbo's term in office any longer if the deadline for elections in October is not met. This might not lead to street violence as in January, since this time the IWG was only calling upon Ivoirians to follow through on what they themselves agreed to. However, it may not prod Gbagbo into action either -- he does not consider himself beholden to the Security Council or answerable to the IWG. End Summary.

¶2. (U) The IWG held its sixth meeting in Abidjan on April 120. Congolese Foreign Minister Rodolphe Adada and UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Pierre Schori co-chaired the meeting. Also attending were Benin Foreign Minister Rogatien Biaou; French Cooperation Minister Brigitte Girardin; Ghanaian Foreign Minister Nana Akufo-Addo; Guinean Foreign Minister Fatouma Sidibe Kaba; Nigerian Foreign Minister Aïchatou Mindaoudou; Nigerian Foreign Minister Oluyemi Adeniji; South African Defense Minister Mosiuoa Lekota; African Union Peace and Security Commissioner Said Djinnit; ECOWAS Executive Secretary Mohamed Ibn Chambas; UN High Representative for Elections in Cote d'Ivoire (HRE) Girard Stoudmann; and representatives from the United Kingdom, The United States, the EU, and the International Organization of French Speaking Countries.

¶3. (C) Prime Minister Banny's presentation was once again long and rambling but decidedly less upbeat than at the last meeting. Instead of dwelling on a long list of accomplishments over the past month, this time Banny spoke more about the challenges ahead and the obstacles he is facing. He said the three main tasks to be completed were simultaneous identification and disarmament, preparation of voter lists, and the return of civil administration to the North. When pressed by the French and others to say exactly what is keeping him from going forward with identification and disarmament immediately, he answered evasively -- that it is important to maintain a spirit of consensus but there is a

lack of political will.

¶4. (C) The IWG then heard presentations by General Gaston Kone Ouassenan, the new Chairman of the National Program for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (PNDDR); Robert Beugre Mambe, Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI); and Alain Lobognon, acting Chairman of the National Commission for the Supervision of Identification (CNSI). All three made clear that the political process is at an impasse over the question of the sequencing of identification and disarmament. Even though all of Cote d'Ivoire's political leaders, including President Gbagbo, agreed on April 8 under the auspices of AU Chairman Sassou that identification and disarmament should be done simultaneously, Gbagbo is not allowing identification to proceed (at a cabinet meeting two weeks ago he rejected Prime Minister Banny's plan for carrying it out) and his followers continue to clamor loudly that disarmament must come first. On the other hand, the senior officials also underscored that if identification and disarmament don't move forward within the next week it will be impossible to hold elections by the end of October.

¶5. (C) All four Ivoirian speakers implored the international community to provide substantial additional resources to help finance the identification, disarmament and electoral processes.

¶6. (C) After these presentations the IWG heard a decidedly pessimistic security briefing from General Fernand Marcel Amoussou, acting force commander for the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (ONUCI) and General Elrick Irastorza, commander of the French peacekeeping force Operation Licorne. General Amoussou said the overall security situation in Cote d'Ivoire is "volatile" and that pro-Gbagbo militias appear to be

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gearing up for a major offensive. General Irastorza said that military commanders on both sides appear to be losing control over their soldiers.

¶7. (C) IWG members then took the floor one after another to express concern over what they had heard in these presentations, and to call for the IWG to take immediate, decisive action to break the current impasse. Ambassador Hooks while agreeing with the need for decisive action suggested a longer-term perspective -- as in any peace process there will be ups and downs, and members of the group had not heard anything at this meeting that they did not know already.

¶8. (C) This lively discussion produced a communique that is considerably more direct and emphatic than those of previous meetings (the full text follows in para. 10). The communique expresses the IWG's "deep concern" about the delays that have been encountered in implementing the road map. It calls on the government to accelerate the simultaneous implementation of identification and disarmament; threatens sanctions against those who violate UNSCR 1633, which can include those who obstruct the transition to elections and/or the work of the IWG; and makes reference to a recent statement by the Secretary General that if the October 2006 deadline for

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presidential elections is not met, the international community will not be in a position to simply renew Cote d'Ivoire's current governance arrangements.

¶9. (C) Comment. We continue to believe the IWG panicked unnecessarily, just as it was overly euphoric at its last meeting. However, at least the group's alarm provoked it to take a stand on the most contentious and potentially explosive issue of the day. Remarkably, not one voice was raised in the meeting to express concern over possible street violence in reaction to this communique, as happened after the IWG took a stand at its January meeting on the question

of the National Assembly's mandate. However, that time the IWG itself pronounced on the merits of the issue, whereas this time it simply called emphatically for Ivoirian leaders to implement what they themselves agreed to. It may not lead to street violence but it may not do much to prod Gbagbo into letting identification go forward either (or FN leader Soro to move on disarmament) -- Gbagbo has never considered himself beholden to the Security Council for the extension of his mandate or answerable to the IWG for his actions (or inaction) in the peace process. End Comment.

¶10. (U) begin text of communique:

FINAL COMMUNIQUE OF THE SIXTH MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP ON COTE D,IVOIRE
Abidjan, 20 April 2006

Original draft: French

¶11. The 6th ministerial level meeting of the International Working Group (IWG) was held in Abidjan on 20 April 2006, under the co-chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Rodolphe Adada, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Francophonie of Congo, and Mr. Pierre Schori, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Cote d,Ivoire. In attendance were Ministers from France, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, South Africa, as well as the Peace and Security Commissioner of the African Union, the High Representative for the Elections in Cote d,Ivoire, the ECOWAS Executive Secretary, and Representatives of the USA, Benin, Niger, United Kingdom, the African Union, the European Union, the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie.

¶12. The Group examined the report of the Mediation Group. It was further briefed by the Prime Minister, the General Coordinator of the National Programme for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (PNDDR), the Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), and the acting Chairman of the National Commission for Supervision of Identification (CNSI).

¶13. While highlighting the progress achieved, the Group expressed its deep concern regarding the delays encountered in the commencement of the activities essential to the effective implementation of the road map. In this regard, the Group underlined that, mid-way through the process, time is running out. The Group also shares the concern of the UN Secretary-General as expressed in paragraph 74 of his 8th

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report on the delay in the peace process and the consequences that would arise from any further blockages if deadlines were not met.

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¶14. Bearing in mind the urgency of the matter, and in keeping with the deadlines set by Security Council resolution 1633 (2005) regarding the holding of the elections no later than 31 October 2006, the Group stressed the following:

a) the Group recalled that the main Ivoirian political leaders have agreed, at their 8 April meeting under the auspices of President Denis Sassou N'guesso, chairman of the African Union, on the simultaneous and immediate implementation of the identification and DDR processes;

b) to that end, the Government of National Reconciliation should take all necessary measures in order to accelerate the simultaneous implementation of the identification and DDR processes;

c) the identification of citizens will allow the establishment of reliable voters lists, which should contribute to the holding of free, fair, open and transparent elections;

d) the Group is concerned about the suspension of the dialogue between the Chiefs of Staff of the FANCI and the Forces nouvelles and strongly encourages them to restore, under the leadership of the Government, the conditions necessary for its smooth continuation, with a view to ensuring the effective commencement of the DDR process and the dismantling of the militia, without further delay;

e) the successful implementation of the identification and disarmament processes calls for the active and irreversible commitment of the political leaders. In this regard, the Group urges all Ivoirian parties to sensitize their followers to the pressing need to abide by all commitments made during the Yamoussoukro I and II meetings.

¶15. In light of persistent violations of the resolutions 1633 (2005) and 1643 (2005), as highlighted in the 8th report of the United Nations Secretary-General to the Security Council on UNOCI, the Group invites the Committee established under resolution 1572 (2004) to identify the perpetrators and not to hesitate to resort to appropriate measures.

¶16. The Group welcomed Mr. Gerard Stoudmann in his capacity as the new High Representative for the elections in Côte d'Ivoire. The Group invites all Ivoirian parties to cooperate with him with a view to accelerating the preparations leading to the holding of credible elections.

¶17. The Group welcomes the redeployment of UNOCI troops to the western part of the country and requests the local authorities and communities to continue to cooperate closely with the United Nations Mission, including respecting the freedom of movement of the impartial forces.

¶18. The Group recommends that the Security Council provides ONUCI, as soon as possible, with the additional means necessary to the achievement of its mandate.

¶19. The Group will hold its next meeting on 19 May 2006 in Côte d'Ivoire.

end text of communique.
Hooks